

**MAG PROCESS FOR PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN  
TRANSPORTATION PLANNING**  
(May 14, 2001)

**PERIODIC UPDATE PROCESS**

The Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21) continues to emphasize public involvement in the metropolitan transportation planning process. The intent of the public involvement provisions in TEA-21 is to increase public awareness and involvement in transportation planning and programming. TEA-21 requires that the metropolitan planning organization work cooperatively with the state department of transportation and the regional transit operator to provide citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, freight shippers, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transit, and other interested parties a reasonable opportunity to comment on proposed transportation plans and programs. MAG has an adopted public process for receiving public input, comment and suggestions on transportation planning and programming in the MAG region. This process is intended to provide complete information on transportation plans, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and opportunities for early and continuing involvement in the process for all segments of the region's population, including Title VI and Environmental Justice communities.

As required in Section 450.212 of the federal regulations for metropolitan planning, the public involvement process is required to have seven elements:

1. Early and continuing public involvement opportunities throughout the transportation planning and programming process;
2. Timely information about transportation issues and process to citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agencies, private providers of transportation, other interested parties, and community segments affected by transportation plans, programs, and projects;
3. Reasonable public access to technical and policy information used in the development of the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), and the Congestion Management System (CMS);
4. Adequate public notice of public involvement activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including but not limited to action on the TIP, LRTP, and CMS;
5. A process for demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input during the planning and program development process;
6. A process for seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, which may face challenges accessing employment, health services, and cultural, social and recreational opportunities; and

7. Periodic review of the effectiveness of the public involvement process to ensure that the process provides full and open access to all and revision of the process as necessary.

The regulations also require a 45-day open comment period on the public process at its inception and each time the process is changed. Section 450.210 further requires a fully coordinated process among the participating transportation agencies (such as the State Department of Transportation, Indian tribal governments, environmental, resource and permit agencies, federal agencies, local jurisdictions, large-scale public and private transportation providers, operators of major intermodal terminals and multistate businesses, and public transit operators). The purpose of this coordination requirement is to enhance public consideration of the issues, plans and programs and reduce redundancies and costs.

The following table details the phases of the public involvement process and the opportunities for input which exist in each phase:

Task or Step	Public Input Opportunities as Part of the Process
Early Opportunity for Input	A public process for early input into the TIP and Plan is held. At this stage, public input is used to identify and address public sentiment regarding transportation plans and programs, with specific reference to upcoming issues and work topics. Several forum options are considered, including open houses, staffbooths at shopping malls, and small groups presentations. Comments received will be summarized and provided to the Regional Council, the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) and Regional Public Transportation Authority (RPTA) boards in the form of an input opportunity report. All meetings are widely advertised with appropriate advanced notice.
Mid Phase Public Hearing	A joint MAG/ADOT/RPTA hearing is held on regional transportation issues. This hearing includes a periodic fiscal analysis report by the MAG Transportation Division.
Mid Phase Input	A mid-phase opportunity for input on the initial plan analysis for the TIP and Plan is also held. Several forum options will be considered, including open houses, booths at shopping malls, and small group presentations. Comments received will be summarized and provided to the Regional Council, ADOT and RPTA boards in the form of an input opportunity report. All meetings are widely advertised with appropriate advanced notice.

## Final Hearing

A transportation public hearing is held to receive comments on the final Draft Plan and Program Update. It is advertised 30 days in advance and draft reports are also available 30 days in advance of the hearing. Comments received are answered, summarized and provided to the Regional Council, ADOT and RPTA boards in the form of an input opportunity report. All meetings are widely advertised, including major daily and minority newspapers, with appropriate advanced notice.

## **ONGOING OUTREACH TO THE PUBLIC:**

### **PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS TO GROUPS**

MAG staff provides speakers upon request to make presentations to community and civic groups, within the limits of available resources.

### **TRADITIONALLY UNDERSERVED POPULATIONS**

MAG addresses underserved populations in a number of ways. Whether it is through the Title VI Community Outreach Associate Program, GIS mapping, the Human Services division of MAG or through programs run by RPTA using MAG funds, the needs of the underserved are considered. Through the Community Outreach Associate Program, MAG uses recognized individuals within the target communities to solicit input from the community and act as a liaison between MAG and the target community. Through RPTA's Complementary Paratransit Plan, the needs of the elderly and people with disabilities are served. In addition, a MAG committee reviews and prioritizes applications for federal assistance under the Elderly Persons with Disabilities Transportation Fund, which provides capital investments to programs serving the elderly and people with disabilities. MAG transportation plans and programs are also submitted to the Human Services Coordinating Committee for review. Additionally, MAG provides multi-modal transportation information for review and comment to the Human Services planning process. During the 2001-2002 planning years, the needs of elderly persons are being addressed further by the Elderly Mobility Initiative. The Initiative identifies and addresses the changing mobility options that are needed as people age. This information will be included in the development of the new Regional Transportation Plan, which is set for completion by the end of 2002.

### **OPEN MEETINGS**

MAG conducts meetings in accord with open meeting laws. Meetings of technical committees, working groups, the Management Committee and Regional Council are open to the public. Notices for these meetings are posted at least 24 hours in advance.

## REGIONAL COUNCIL COMMENT PERIOD

1. Submittal of Request to Speak Cards: All cards requesting an opportunity to address the Regional Council are required to be submitted prior to the beginning of the meeting. Those who turn in late cards are given an opportunity to provide comments at the end of the meeting.
2. Time Allotted for Public Comment: Three opportunities are provided for public comment at Regional Council meetings (Call to the Audience, Consent Agenda, and Action Items to be Heard). The total time allowed for all of these opportunities, cumulatively, is five minutes for any single speaker. For example, an individual speaker may choose to spend one minute providing comment on the consent agenda. The speaker would then have four minutes remaining to comment, but could not spend more than three minutes on a single item.
3. Speaking Rules and Chairman's Discretion: The Chairman or his/her designee has the power to revoke speaking rights if any violation of the speaking rules occur. These rules include: speak from the podium, comment in three minutes or less and comments must pertain solely to the agenda item and shall not include any personal attacks on other citizens or persons present at the meeting. The Chairman or his/her designee also has the power to accept additional comments and extend the time of the speaker.

## NEWSLETTERS

MAG produces a variety of newsletters, including a quarterly magazine and projects specific publications. These newsletters report information of general interest on events and programs at MAG, as well as on a specific item such as the TIP or Plan.

## PRESS RELEASES

Press releases are prepared and distributed to local media in conjunction with periodic news events.

## MEETING NOTICES AND ADVERTISEMENTS IN PRINCIPAL NEWSPAPERS

When financially feasible, all of the formal public hearings and public involvement opportunities are announced with display advertisements in the largest circulation newspaper, in minority oriented newspapers. Where appropriate, information is provided in a bilingual format. Meeting notices for the TIP and Plan are sent out fifteen to 30 days in advance.

## DIRECT MAILING

MAG maintains a current mailing list that includes interested citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, private providers of transportation, advocates for low-income interests and minority interests, and representatives of community groups with an interest in transportation. This mailing list is used to announce meetings, distribute newsletters, and

for other opportunities for public involvement. Interested individuals are added to the mailing list upon request.

## STAFF CONTACTS

The name of an appropriate staff contact is published in the TIP, Plan and other related documents.

## OTHER MAG ACTIVITIES AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC

### PLANS, STUDIES, TIP, ETC.

Prior to the final completion of plans or programs the work is made available to the public for review and comment, so that public concerns can be considered and reflected in the final documents. When draft studies, plans, programs and reports are completed they are presented to the Management Committee and Regional Council for review and action and are available for public review. Once approved, these reports are available upon request, however fees may apply to certain documents. Historical reference files of all documents are maintained and these reports are available for public review.

## COMMITTEE REPRESENTATION

MAG has a broad committee structure which involves technical professionals, administrative personnel, elected officials, member agencies, business interests and citizen volunteers, and many professions and interest groups. The meetings of the committees follow the policy described above under “Open Meetings.” Several committees were formed and currently exist, due to federal regulations. Some of these committees produce reports available to the public. Among the numerous committees related to transportation are the following:

<u>Regional Council</u>	Includes an elected official from each city and town, a member of the County Board of Supervisors, two representatives from the ADOT Board, two Indian community representatives, as well as a representative from the Citizen’s Transportation Oversight Committee (CTOC).
<u>Management Committee</u>	City and town managers, the county administrator, the managers of the Gila River Indian Community and Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, the director of ADOT and director of the RPTA.
<u>Air Quality Committee</u>	Includes officials from MAG member agencies as well as representatives from ADOT, the Department of Environmental Quality, and citizens.
<u>Streets Committee</u>	Has technical staff members from MAG member agencies.

Enhancement Funds  
Working Group

Has members from other MAG committees and working groups, including the Street, Bicycle, Management committees, as well as professionals representing the fields of archeology, art, landscape architecture and historic preservation.

Ad Hoc Elderly Persons  
with Disabilities  
Transportation Committee

Has members from MAG member agencies and advisory groups which represent low-income groups, disabled citizens and the elderly.

Regional Bicycle Task  
Force

Has technical and administrative members from MAG member agencies.

Pedestrian Working  
Group

Has members from technical staff of interested jurisdictions and a landscape architect.

Transportation Review  
Committee

Has membership composed of senior transportation and administrative professionals from MAG member agencies.

Human Services  
Coordinating and  
Technical Committees

Has technical and policy representation of cities, county, and community organizations to identify and prioritize problems related to human services needs.